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FROM SUBSISTENCE TO MULTI-PERFORMANCE: RETHINKING THE CARIBBEAN HOMEGARDEN AS AN INNOVATIVE MODEL IN MODERN AGROFORESTRY

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Abstract: Subsistence farming on small plots, often located near the house (the so-called homegarden, HG), is a strong feature of rural life in the Caribbean islands. It closely resembles the subsistence cultivation of Latin American areas that have been classified as a subcategory of tropical agroforestry systems (AFS, Nair 1985). In this study we test the hypothesis that these ancient family HG fall within the modern and integrative definition of agroforestry recently proposed by the World Agroforestry Center (2016).
The study comprises, i) ancomprehensive (?) review of literature (n = 135) dealing with the main concepts of AFS or diverse case studies in Latin American regions or other tropical reviews (x references) and ii) a 5 year-field work carried out in the French Antilles during 6 sessions of diverse surveys with farmers (n = 342).

A brief historical perspective indicated that the first HG practionners were the slaves who often grew their own food on the unused - sometimes marginal and degraded - , lands near the plantations. Food supplies and other services were important in adapting to their harsh living conditions before and even after abolition. The fact that these systems (HG or AFS) are still an essential part of land use and household survival has been frequently mentioned in recent literature.Their main features are described in this review.

The field research aimed to analyze the different components of the system (trees, crops, livestock) to provide a functional diagnosis and suggest characteristics of the Caribbean HG in it's various biophysical and socio-economic dimensions. Their multiperformance, and ecosystemic services, were qualified.

Based on all the characteristics of the Caribbean synthesized from literature and field data, we have hypothesized their contribution as mixed tree-crop-livestock systems to this new concept of modern agroforestry. Ongoing studies are testing their multi-performance (productive, environmental,...) through the prism of the integration of their subcomponents.